

Korean Honorification: A Kind of Expressive Meaning

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1. Introduction

Honorification in Korean falls along two dimensions, as in Japanese. The basic example in (1)a has counterparts with an honorific subject (b), politeness to the hearer (c), and both (d):

- (1) a. ku salam-i ka-ss-ta
that person-NOM go-PAST-DECL
'That person went.'
- b. ku pwun-i ka-si-ess-ta
that person(HON)-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
- c. ku salam-i ka-ss-upni-ta
that person-NOM go-PAST-POL-DECL
- d. ku pwun-i ka-si-ess-upni-ta
that person(HON)-NOM go-HON-PAST-POL-DECL

These types are sometimes known as the 'performative' type (honorification to hearer) and the 'propositional' type (honorification to a clause-internal argument, such as the subject), following Harada (1976). In this paper we will only be concerned with the 'propositional' type of honorification, using the term 'target' to indicate the referent of the clausal argument which is linguistically honored. The relevant honorific forms in (1) are the suppletive honorific noun *pwun* and the verbal suffix (*u*)*si* which marks honorification of the subject.

Roughly speaking, honoring an argument recognizes that the target has some social superiority in the speech context. Depending on the particular expression, this may be achieved by raising the target above the speaker or hearer (honorification), or by lowering the speaker relative to the target (humilification). Looking at the grammars of the languages as a whole, both Korean and Japanese appear to have both honorific and humilific forms (see Martin (1975, 1992), among many others). Non-subject honorific forms in particular may be of the humilific type (see section 4 below).

1.1. Previous approaches to honorification

Argument honorification has been analyzed by some researchers as an instance of agreement between a verb and the argument as a syntactic phenomenon analogous to subject-verb agreement for person and number, or other features, familiar from Indo-European languages (Ahn (2002), Koopman (2005),

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Hasegawa (2005), Toribio (1990), Ura (1993); Namai (2000) offers a dissenting view). Following this analogy, these syntactic views typically assume that the subject has some honorific feature specification which the verb inherits. Harada's (1976) 'object honorification' has also been treated on a par with syntactic object-agreement, and in fact has recently been argued to have an empirically verifiable syntactic component by Boeckx and Niinuma (2004) for Japanese, which has a much wider system of non-subject honorification than Korean.¹

A different tradition of analysis has recognized the rather non-syntactic nature of honorification and has treated it as a pragmatic phenomenon. In the generative literature, several proposals within the Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG) framework in particular have analyzed honorification solely in terms of constraints on context (such as Han (1991), Park (1992), Pollard and Sag (1994), Lee (1996), Choi (2003)); the recent account of Kim and Yang (2005) treats honorification as also having a formal syntactic aspect. The HPSG analyses all specify that each honorific item introduces constraints on its referent, or the subject's referent in the case of an honorific verb, which have to unify. This also follows the standard treatment of Indo-European subject-verb agreement in terms of unification of the subject's information and the verb's information (see Pollard and Sag (1994)), though it moves the locus of agreement from the syntax or semantics to the pragmatics.

In the syntactic treatments of honorification, feature-value pairs [HON +] and [HON -] are typically introduced, if any explicit analysis is given, to characterize the elements that may enter into 'agreement' with each other. For example *ka-si-ta* is the [HON +] form of 'go' and *ka-ta* is the [HON -] form. The pragmatic treatments have similarly posited an opposition, in which *ka-si-ta* means that the relation of the referent of the subject being socially superior to the speaker holds in the context of utterance, and *ka-ta* means that the relation does not hold. Some analyses have allowed three values for [HON], with a third 'unspecified' or *any* value (e.g., Yun (1991), Kim and Yang (2005)). For example, the subject in (2)a might be treated as [HON +]; if so, the subject in (2)b is [HON *any*], and the subject in (2)c is [HON -]:

- (2) a. *sensayng-nim-i* *ka-si-ess-ta*
 teacher-HON-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
- b. *sensayng-i* *ka-si-ess-ta*
 teacher-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
- c. *koyangi-ka* *ka-(*si-)ess-ta*
 cat-NOM go-(*HON-)PAST-DECL

The reasoning here is that if *sensayng-nim* in (2)a is [HON +], then the subject in (2)b should not be specified in that way, for it precisely lacks the honorific augment *-nim*. Nevertheless, this bare form is compatible with the honorific verb, unlike the non-human subject *koyangi* in (2)c. Hence (2)b is treated as having a [HON *any*] subject and a [HON +] verb; these specifications may unify, and the example is well-formed. Note that, strictly speaking, there is no agreement between the subject and verb, as the subject has no value for HON to pass on to the verb.² This lack of verifiable agreement features on the subject is a problem facing many previous accounts, as we detail below, especially in section 3.1.

¹With regard to the claim of Boeckx and Niinuma (2004) that non-subject honorification in Japanese is 'object agreement', Bobaljik and Yatsushiro (2006) offer several arguments why this is a (syntactic) miscategorization.

²More specifically, the unification of non-conflicting features is a central part of the account of agreement in non-transformational approaches, as opposed to 'specified feature (or value) copying' (a.k.a. 'feature valuation'), most recently manifest in the notion of Agree in Minimalist syntax (e.g., Chomsky (2000)).

In this paper we offer an outline of an analysis of honorification which treats it as a privative specification: essentially, only the positive values mentioned above exist. We argue that there should be no notions like ‘non-honorific form’, due in part to a consideration of the nature of honorification, which we address directly. This is the main point that we wish to make. In addition, we will present considerable evidence for the view that honorification is a phenomenon which has very little in common with canonical subject-verb agreement. In fact, the interpretations of honorific marking on a noun phrase and of subject honorific marking on a verb are different, so it would be quite surprising for there to be a grammatical condition of agreement between subject and verb. Additionally, it is simply impossible to provide a coherent system of feature specification for nouns and verbs which applies to the full range of data. The reason for this is that honorification is not a binary-valued property, but is a linearly variable one. We briefly introduce this point in the following subsection.

1.2. Expressive meaning

Honorification is fundamentally an ‘expressive derivative’ (see Beard (1995), Volpe (2005)), part of the expressive content of an utterance, which is present in parallel to its regular proposition content (see Cruse (1986), Kaplan (1999), Potts (2005)). Potts and Kawahara (2004) present a sketch of the analysis of Japanese honorification as an ‘emotive’ component of expressive meaning (see section 5.1). Emotive meaning is continuous, and incremental, in the sense that the more of it that is presented by the speaker, the stronger effect (cf. Choe (2004) on “honorification strengthening”, rather than “honorific spreading”). If I call you *pig*, it would be ruder for me to call you *filthy pig*, possibly ruder if I use *filthy swine*, and so on. It can easily be seen that a specification like [RUDE +] on lexical items will not suffice for such examples, which are all rude, but to differing degrees.

The examples in (3)–(4), from Martin (1992, 637, 298), illustrate the forms of honorification in Korean, and its incremental nature: (3) is a very honorific example, which has four markers of honorification in it (in italics):

(3) moksa-*nim-kkeyse* ku *malssum*-ul ha-*si*-ess-upni-ta
 pastor-HON-HON.SUBJ that word(HON)-ACC do-HON-PAST-POL-DECL
 ‘The pastor said that.’

- (4) a. coh-un sayngkak-i-pni-ta
 good-MOD idea-COP-POL-DECL
- b. coh-un sayngkak-i-*si*-pni-ta
 good-MOD idea-COP-HON-POL-DECL
- c. coh-*usi*-n sayngkak-i-pni-ta
 good-HON-MOD idea-COP-POL-DECL
- d. coh-*usi*-n sayngkak-i-*si*-pni-ta
 good-HON-MOD idea-COP-HON-POL-DECL
- ‘That’s a good idea you have there.’

In (4), the a example is not honorific; b and c are honorific, and d is very honorific. In general, the more honorific forms are used, the more honorific is the whole expression. The same holds for politeness marking. This is the incremental aspect of honorific marking.

Returning to the meaning of emotive terms, their meanings are privative in nature, in general. If instead of calling you *pig*, I speak to you using non-emotive terms, this does not mean that I am being deliberately non-rude ([RUDE –]!); it means that I am simply not introducing that emotive component into my utterance. We feel that honorification has exactly this aspect of expressive meaning, as Potts and Kawahara suggest: it is incremental, and it is privative. Hence, while we will view *ka-si-ta* (‘go-HON-DECL’) as an honorific form, *ka-ta* (‘go-DECL’) will simply be a form that lacks any expressive content: it is certainly not an honorific form, but it is equally certainly not a non-honorific form, any more than me calling you *person* rather than *pig* is an expression of [RUDE –].

Honorification also has a performative aspect: simply by saying it, the speaker means something and also does something (see Potts (2005, 180)). That is to say, the mere act of using an honorific form is an act of paying respect, just like bowing, lowering one’s voice etc. More pointedly, Kaplan (1999, 27) observes “... if I am correct about parts of language being marked to *display* respect ... then the use of such language, even if thought to be insincere, is *respectful behavior*, and should produce an affective response in its own right”. (See also footnote 12.) In this sense, even Harada’s ‘propositional’ honorifics have a ‘performative’ aspect. In Korean at least, failure to use an honorific verb with *-(u)si* when the subject is socially superior is typically perceived as rude, and it is this social pressure which strongly favors the use of honorific verbs predicated of honorifiable subjects; such examples have the appearance of exhibiting (grammatical) subject-verb agreement.

The paper is organized as follows. In the following section, we present the main expressions of honorification in Korean. In section 3, we present a range of arguments against the idea that verbs and their subjects could match in some specification for a feature HON. Section 4 introduces further data, involving non-subject honorific forms. Finally, in section 5, we draw together our observations about what honorific marking really means, and suggest the basis of a formal analysis (building directly on Potts and Kawahara (2004)), of honorification as expressive meaning.

2. Honorific Forms

In this section we present the ways in which Korean provides for honorific marking on nouns, and on verbs. This leads into the discussion in section 3 of the ways in which honorific marking diverges from normal expectations about subject-verb agreement.

2.1. Honorification on Nouns

Some nouns can take the suffix *-nim*, which roughly means ‘honorable person’. Only a certain subset of nouns, which we refer to as *status* nouns, may host this suffix. For example, *uysa* (‘doctor’) may host *-nim*, but *salam* (‘person’) may not. The use of *-nim* means that the speaker recognizes that the referent of the host noun is socially superior to himself/herself.

The honorific subject marker *-kkeyse* is a kind of case marker, which also means that the speaker recognizes that the referent of the host noun is socially superior to himself/herself. It usually cooccurs with honorific marking on the predicate, as (5)a shows.

- (5) a. ape-nim-kkeyse mence ka-*(si-)ess-ta
 father-HON-HON.SUBJ first go-*(HON-)PAST-DECL
 ‘Father went first.’
- b. ape-nim-i mence ka-(si-)ess-ta
 father-HON-NOM first go-(HON-)PAST-DECL

These examples suggest that *-kkeyse* implies *-(u)si* but not vice versa (observed by Yoon (2005)). Lee and Ramsey (2000) note that the use of *-kkeyse* is not usually necessary, and except for very formal situations, it can add a sense of ‘overdone honorification’. They observe (p.242): “. . . rather than thinking of *-(u)si* and *-kkeyse* as linked together, it is probably closer to reality to consider occurrences of *-(u)si* . . . as compatible with any subject particle and *-kkeyse* as showing the function of showing an extreme level of deference on the speaker’s part”. The implication observed by Yoon shows that the extreme deference marked by *-kkeyse* does not fit well with the lack of deference signalled by verb not marked by *-(u)si*.³

-kkeyse marks a subject, but only marks one of the subjects in a multiple subject construction (see Yoon (2005)), and it marks the subject as nominative (see Sells (1995, 2004, 2006)):

- (6) a. cheli-ka ape-nim-kkeyse pwuca-i-*(si)-ta
 cheli-NOM father-HON-*-kkeyse* rich-COP-*(HON)-DECL
 ‘It is Cheli whose father is rich.’
- b. kim-sensayng-nim-kkeyse twulccay atu-nim-i chencay-i-si-ta
 kim-teacher-HON-*-kkeyse* second son-HON-NOM genius-COP-HON-DECL
 ‘Professor Kim’s second son is a genius.’

To a first approximation, only those NPs which are headed by a status noun may host the honorific subject marker *-kkeyse*. So while *ape-nim-uy son* ‘father’s hand’ is an ‘honorific NP’ (cf. (10)c below) in one sense, for it can participate in apparent honorific agreement with the verb, it cannot host the honorific subject marker *-kkeyse*, and the head noun *son* itself cannot host *-nim* (which means ‘honorable person’). There is a distinction between NPs which participate in apparent honorific agreement with verbs, and those NPs whose heads can be overtly marked as honorific by *-nim* or *-kkeyse*.

However, the distribution of *-kkeyse* is wider than that of *-nim*. The *wh*-pronoun *nwukwu* can host *-kkeyse*, as shown in (7), but not *-nim*; so **nwukwu-nim* is ungrammatical.

- (7) nwukwu-kkeyse i kes-ul kecelha-si-keyss-ni?
 who-NOM this thing-ACC reject-HON-FUT-Q
 ‘Who will reject this?’

As *-kkeyse* marks a high degree of deference, an example with just the regular nominative-marked *nwukwu-ka* is a version of (7) that is respectful enough for most social settings.

Informally, we can say that the conditions in (8) characterize the use of *-nim* and *-kkeyse* (using ‘su’ and ‘sp’ for ‘subject’ and ‘speaker’, and > for social superiority):

- (8) if su > spk, *-nim* or *-kkeyse* may be used;
 if spk > su, *-nim* or *-kkeyse* are not used.

2.2. Subject Honorification on Verbs

-(u)si on a verb is informally characterized as ‘subject honorification’. More precisely, it elevates the social status of a human referent related to the grammatical subject of the clause, with respect to the hearer. Hence, while we can find examples where a body-part subject appears in a clause with a verb

³Specifically, an example with *-kkeyse* but without *-(u)si* would mean that the speaker elevates the subject very high with respect to the speaker, but not at all with respect to the hearer. (See section 5.2.)

marked by *-(u)si*, thereby honoring the human individual whose body part was mentioned, such a body-part noun cannot be marked itself by the forms mentioned above, *-nim* or *-kkeyse*. We refer to the target of *-(u)si* as the ‘maximal human referent’ of the subject.

A very basic fact about *-(u)si* indicates why it could not be ‘agreeing’ in some feature specification with a noun phrase (typically) marked by *-nim* or *-kkeyse*: honorification on the verb does not mean the same as honorification on a noun phrase. It is clear that honorific marking on a noun phrase elevates the referent of that phrase **relative to the speaker**. However, according to Han (1991), Ihm et al. (1988) and Lee and Kuno (1995), *-(u)si* means that the maximal human referent of the subject is socially superior **relative to the hearer**. Hence we have these conditions on *-(u)si*, using ‘hr’ for ‘hearer’:

- (9) if su > hr, *-(u)si* is used;
 if hr > su, *-(u)si* is not used.

Naturally, if the su is socially superior to both sp and hr, *-(u)si* is used, and in canonical conversational settings, the speaker intends to elevate the target above both the hearer and the speaker him/herself. In particular, if the target is not socially superior to the hearer, *-(u)si* is not used.

However, for a verb marked with *-(u)si*, the target is the maximal human referent of the subject. Note that the maximal human referent is not necessarily the surface subject, and in some cases the target of honorification is unexpressed.⁴ In the following examples, all from Sohn (1999), the target is either part of the subject, or a topic, but not the subject itself:

- (10) a. ce-uy apeci-nun khi-ka khu-si-pni-ta
 I-GEN father-TOP height-NOM big-HON-POL-DECL
 ‘My father is tall.’
 b. apeci-uy somay-ka ccalp-usey-yo
 father-GEN sleeve-NOM short-HON-LEVEL
 ‘The sleeves (e.g., of your shirt) are short, Dad.’
 c. apeci-uy koyangi-ka khu-(*si-)ta
 father-GEN cat-NOM big-(*HON-)DECL
 ‘My father’s cat is big.’

We feel that the use of *-(u)si* is related to the topic, as Yun (1991) suggested, but perhaps where the ‘topic’ is more who the utterance is relevant to, rather than strictly ‘about’ (see also section 3.2).

2.3. Irregular Forms

The productive pattern for verbal honorification applies to all verbs, except for the three which have irregular subject honorific forms, shown in (11). We provide these forms for completeness’ sake; their behavior in the honorific system is the same as that of regularly inflecting verbs.

- (11) a. mek-ta ~ *mek-usi-ta ~ capswusi-ta (‘eat’)

⁴According to Sohn (1999), honorific marking is obligatory for inalienable body parts, ideas, health, etc., but optional for books, houses, business, cars, clothes, money, flowers, etc., which may be considered to be under the control of the target.

- b. *ca-ta* ~ **ca-si-ta* ~ *cwumwusi-ta* ('sleep')
- c. *iss-ta* ~ *iss-usi-ta* ~ *kyeysi-ta* ('be, exist, have')

For *mek-ta* and *ca-ta*, the honorific form supplants the regular honorific in *-(u)si*. Interestingly, the verb *iss-ta* splits: the regular *iss-usi-ta* means 'have(HON)' while the suppletive *kyeysi-ta* means 'be/exist(HON)' (see Martin (1992, 319ff.)). The irregular honorific forms are also morphologically irregular in that they can be followed by the infinitive-like verb ending *-e/a*, unlike any regular subject honorific form (see Han (1991), Sells (1995)); the honorific information is encoded as part of the verb root, as in (12)a:

- (12) a. *capswusi-e* *po-(si-)ta*
eat(HON)-COMP try-(HON-)DECL
'try eating'
- b. (*kong-ul*) *cap-(*usi-)e* *po-(si-)ta*
(ball-ACC) catch-(*HON-)COMP try-(HON-)DECL
'try catching (a ball)'

A regular verb such as *cap-ta* cannot host both the honorific marker and the *-e/a* infinitive marker, glossed here as COMP, as these two forms compete for the same morphological position.⁵

3. Honorification Is Not Agreement

There are various reasons why even the relation between a subject and a verb, with honorification involved, should not be treated as agreement.⁶ One reason was given above in section 2.2: honorific marking on a noun phrase and honorific marking on the verb do not mean the same thing; if they agreed in some feature specification, that specification would have to be interpreted (possibly differently) in each position where the agreement is manifest.

Rather than participating in agreement, each honorific form in a given example provides some information about the social status of the target relative to the speaker or the hearer, and there must be some consistency about how the speaker manages such information. In this section we present several arguments to show that there is no plausible sense in which syntactic feature specifications play a role in the analysis of honorification. It is also important to note that in contexts which do not call for deference, as in news reporting or textbook descriptions, honorific forms are not used (see the discussion around example (44)). Yet no other grammatical 'principles' are suspended in such contexts.

3.1. What are the values of an HON feature, and which nouns have them?

Continuing to focus on subject honorification, the traditional idea is that the subject has some feature specifications with which the verb agrees. This idea seems to underlie all syntactic treatments of Korean subject honorification as agreement, and so such treatments assume specifications like [HON +] and [HON –] as a starting point.⁷

⁵The surface form of the first verb in (12)b is *cap-a*, due to a regular rule of Korean morpho-phonology.

⁶Some of our arguments in this section are anticipated in part by Choe (2004). Honorific marking is also dependent on the context of use (see section 5.2), which suggests that it does not have a purely formal syntactic character.

⁷Volpe (2005) offers a syntactic account of honorification wherein an 'expressive' head Exp[Honor] is introduced into the structure, as many times as necessary to get the right overt output. There is no 'negative' or 'absent' value of this feature,

A few nouns in Korean are unspecified morphologically for honorific properties but nevertheless co-occur with verbs which are both honorific and non-honorific, as in (13)–(15), including the *wh*-phrase *nwu(kwu)* and the null argument *pro*:

- (13) a. *nwu(kwu)-ka o-ass-ni?*
 who-NOM come-PAST-Q
 ‘Who came?’
- b. *nwu(kwu)-ka o-si-ess-ni?*
 who-NOM come-HON-PAST-Q
 ‘Who(HON) came?’
- (14) a. *ku pang-ey iss-upni-kka?*
 that room-LOC be-POL-Q
 ‘Is (someone) in that room?’
- b. *ku pang-ey kyeysi-pni-kka?*
 that room-LOC HON.be-POL-Q
 ‘Is (someone(HON)) in that room?’

Similarly, a negative polarity item like *amwuto* may appear with either type of verb:

- (15) a. *amwuto eps-ess-ta*
 anyone NEG.be-PAST-DECL
 ‘No one was there.’
- b. *amwuto an kyeysi-ess-ta*
 anyone NEG be.HON-PAST-DECL
 ‘No one(HON) was there.’

In order to generate the correct verb forms, it has to be assumed that there are two versions of *nwu(kwu)*, *amwuto*, *pro*, specified as [HON +] or [HON –]. Intuitively, they should truly be unspecified, as this is part of the point of their lexical meanings; and of course, *pro* has no overt form at all. Any account which relied on specifying [HON +] versions of these nouns would be very unnatural: these would be the only forms in Korean which are honorific in the absence of any morphological clue.

A second consideration showing how problematic many previous assumptions about honorification are involves the issue of which nouns could plausibly be marked for an HON feature. In section 2.1 we introduced the honorific augment *-nim*, which attaches to nouns of status, or family relation (e.g., *moksa-nim* (‘pastor’) or *eme-nim* (‘mother’)). However, *-nim* does not attach to all nouns which intuitively have some honorific potential. For example **elun-nim* ‘adult’ is ill-formed, though there is no semantic or pragmatic reason for this. One possible approach to this would be to specify *elun* as [HON –], so that *elun-nim* would involve a conflict of HON values. In turn, this approach would predict that **nwukwu-nim* (‘who’) should be acceptable, as *nwukwu* has a [HON +] variant (see (13)b above and (27) below). However, there is no form **nwukwu-nim*. At the other end of the scale *taythonglyeng* (‘president’) also does not combine with *-nim*, even though it clearly refers to a socially superior individual.

and Volpe proposes that cooccurrence restrictions between a subject and an honorifically-marked predicate are to handled as cases of ‘semantic selection’. This account shares many properties in spirit with our proposals here.

The alternative is to simply list, or otherwise characterize in terms of saliently honorifiable cultural concepts, the nouns which can host *-nim*; although perhaps unexciting, this approach at least has the potential to provide empirical adequacy. With regard to the main point of this section, we find no use for [HON +] and [HON –] in accounting for the distribution of *-nim*.

Next, we return to the examples in (2), looking carefully at the manifestation of honorific marking on the subject and on the predicate:

- (2) a. sensayng-nim-i ka-si-ess-ta
 teacher-HON-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
- b. sensayng-i ka-si-ess-ta
 teacher-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
- c. koyangi-ka ka-(*si-)ess-ta
 cat-NOM go-(*HON-)PAST-DECL

The examples in (15)a and (15)c appear straightforward, but how is (15)b to be analyzed, in terms of an agreement mechanism? If it is assumed that the plain noun *sensayng* is [HON +], then (16) cannot be accounted for:

- (16) sensayng-i ka-ss-ta
 teacher-NOM go-PAST-DECL

This example is a problem, for if *sensayng* is [HON +], then (16) has a [HON +] subject and a [HON –] verb, in violation of a putative agreement constraint. As discussed by Han (1991), Park (1992) and Pollard and Sag (1994), (2)b and (16) are unusual examples, but they are not syntactically ill-formed.⁸ They may even be awkward, as the social contexts which would license them might deviate from the understood social norms. On the other hand, (2)a is a canonical example.

Nevertheless, there are contexts in which the non-canonical examples such as (16) may appear, as illustrated by (17) and (18):

- (17) (haksayng-i ka-ci anh-ko) sensayng-i ka-ss-ta
 (student-NOM go-COMP NEG-CONJ) teacher-NOM go-PAST-DECL
 ‘The student didn’t go but the teacher went.’
- (18) kim sensayng-i ka-ss-ta
 Kim teacher-NOM go-PAST-DECL
 ‘Teacher Kim (or just: Mr./Mrs. Kim) went.’
 (Context: Mr./Mrs./Teacher Kim is one of my colleagues; I am on the same social level as him/her.)

The correct account of these examples must involve the incremental nature of honorification: they do not involve feature clash, which a syntactic agreement account would be forced into, but rather they

⁸In fact, these analyses effectively propose a clash of honorification values of 1 (yes) and 0 (no) in the contextual information of the mismatching examples, though Han and Park imply that this clash can have some informative value. The points about well-formedness that these authors made seem to have been misunderstood in some of the subsequent literature.

involve unusual combinations of the degrees of expressed social superiority involving the speaker, hearer, and referent of the subject.

The continuous and incremental nature of honorification is evident from the following examples, versions of (18), which a rough specification of the context of each example shown:

- (19) a. kim sensayng-i ka-si-ess-ta.
Kim teacher-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
(Context: Teacher Kim is one of my colleagues, and I am being slightly polite to him/her, by indicating respect to him/her (primarily) relative to the hearer (cf. (18)).)
- b. kim sensayng-kkeyse ka-si-ess-ta.
Kim teacher-HON.SUBJ go-HON-PAST-DECL
(Context: Teacher Kim is one of my colleagues, and I am being more respectful towards him/her than in the previous examples.)
- c. kim sensayng-nim-kkeyse ka-si-ess-ta.
Kim teacher-HON-HON.SUBJ go-HON-PAST-DECL
(This is the most respectful example.)

(19)a may be considered a little strange, but this is not a fact of grammar. In using an example of this form, I (the speaker) have failed to take the opportunity to elevate the teacher with respect to myself (the speaker), by not using *-nim* on the subject; yet I have elevated the teacher with respect to you (the hearer), but using *-(u)si* on the verb. Hence such an example requires a context in which it is socially acceptable for me to consider the teacher on the same level as myself, yet superior to you, the hearer.

The account sketched here follows the description in Han (1991). Han also discusses the converse type of example:

- (20) kim sensayng-nim-i o-ass-e.yo
Kim teacher-HON-NOM come-PAST-LEVEL
'Teacher Kim came.'

By using this specific expression, the speaker elevates the subject over him/herself, but not over the hearer. Han observes that this example can be used when the speaker is one of Teacher Kim's students, and where the hearer is Teacher Kim's father. Hence the student elevates the subject, Teacher Kim, but cannot elevate the subject over the hearer, over Teacher Kim's father.

The following set of examples involving the noun *malssum* (the honorific form of *mal* ('word')) also illustrate the incremental nature of honorific marking and the different contributions to context from the subject and the predicate:

- (21) a. ku salam-uy malssum-i olh-supni-ta
that person-GEN word(HON)-NOM right-POL-DECL
(Slightly respectful.)
- b. ku pwun-uy malssum-i olh-supni-ta
that person(HON)-GEN word(HON)-NOM right-POL-DECL
(More respectful.)
- c. ku pwun-uy malssum-i olh-usi-pni-ta
that person(HON)-GEN word(HON)-NOM right-HON-POL-DECL
(Most respectful.)

‘What that person said is right.’

Speakers may have slightly different intuitions about the appropriateness of the first two examples here, but they are all grammatical. The first example is respectful to the maximal human referent of the subject only to a slight degree, and the speaker does not elevate that target over the hearer. The speaker elevates the target more with respect to him/herself in the b example. And in the c example, the speaker elevates the target above both him/herself and the hearer. Once again, an analysis trading on [HON +] and [HON –] makes wrong predictions, or simply misses the point: the a example is not a ‘non-honorific’ example, for *malssum* is an honorific noun, yet the verb is in its [HON –] form, and *salam* is the ‘non-honorific’ counterpart of *pwun*. The subjects of examples b and c are formally identical, yet only the verb in c contains the honoric *-(u)si*. These examples clearly illustrate the futility of manipulating formal honorific features; all three examples are honorific, just to different degrees, and asking about what is agreeing with what is asking the wrong question.

In summary, there seems to be no consistent way to assign feature specifications like [HON +] and [HON –] to nouns and to verbs, as part of a predictive system of acceptability for examples like those discussed in this subsection.

3.2. Honorification on the copula

Now let us consider again the examples in (4), which involve a subject relative clause on a noun which is the predicate of the copula. The abstract syntactic structure is shown in (4)a'. As far as we are aware, there is a coherent syntactic agreement analysis of the examples in (4)b–d.

- (4) a'. *pro* [[*t coh-un*] *sayngkak*] *i-pni-ta*
- b. *coh-un sayngkak-i-si-pni-ta*
good-MOD idea-COP-HON-POL-DECL
- c. *coh-usi-n sayngkak-i-pni-ta*
good-HON-MOD idea-COP-POL-DECL
- d. *coh-usi-n sayngkak-i-si-pni-ta*
good-HON-MOD idea-COP-HON-POL-DECL

‘That’s a good idea you have there.’

In examples (4)c–d, the subject of *coh-usi-* is the trace of the relativized subject *sayngkak*, which would not normally be considered to be an honorific noun; yet the predicate is honorific-marked. In the matrix clause, *sayngkak* is part of the copular predicate, whose subject is *pro*. This subject has an implicitly deictic interpretation (English ‘that’), yet it may co-occur with *-(u)si* on the predicate, in examples (4)b and (4)d. Where are the [HON +] specifications that the predicates in (4) are agreeing with (optionally)? Note that the agreement approach requires that *sayngkak* is [HON +] in (4)c, in order to trigger the appearance of *-(u)si* within the relative clause.

Intuitively, the honored one is the holder or experiencer of the idea, which must be given either directly or in context when *sayngkak* is in a non-predicative position, in order to trigger honorification on the verb, as in (22), examples referring to an idea due to a socially superior which the speaker thinks is correct:

- (22) a. ape-nim-uy sayngkak-i olh-usi-pni-ta
 father-HON-GEN idea-NOM right-HON-POL-DECL
 ‘Father’s idea is right.’
- b. ku pwun-uy sayngkak-i olh-usi-pni-ta
 that person(HON)-GEN idea-NOM right-HON-POL-DECL
 ‘That person(HON)’s idea is right.’
- c. ku sayngkak-i olh-usi-pni-ta
 that idea-NOM right-HON-POL-DECL
 ‘That idea is right.’

However, whatever specification we give for *sayngkak*, examples (4)b–c are ‘disagreeing’ examples in the sense that honorification is present on one of the predicates associated with *sayngkak* yet absent on the other. And while (4)d is more consistently honorific than (4)b–c, there is no sense in which those examples involve any kind of grammatical violation.

Nouns which are in the same semantic domain as *sayngkak* work similarly, in (4), such as *cilmwun* ‘question’, *cicek* ‘point’, *kulim* ‘painting’; other nouns, for example *samwusil* ‘office’ or *khemphyuthe* ‘computer’ cannot easily be used as the predicate of a copula marked with *-(u)si*, although there is a clear intuition that (23)a is more easily contextualized than (23)b:

- (23) a. ?khemphyuthe-ka cham coh-usi-ney-yo
 computer-NOM really good-HON-EVID-LEVEL
 ‘Your computer is really good (I see).’
- b. ??yenphil-i cham coh-usi-ney-yo
 pencil-NOM really good-HON-EVID-LEVEL
 ‘Your pencil is really good (I see).’

Other examples show that the connection of the socially superior target to the copular predicate is quite tenuous in syntactic terms. (24), from Lee (2006), involves predicates with the honorific *-(u)si* even though their subjects are free relatives formed from (non-honorific) clauses.

- (24) nah-un kes-un eme-nim-i-usi-ess-ciman, kil-un kes-un
 bear-PAST one-TOP mother-HON-COP-HON-PAST-but, feed-PAST one-TOP
 halme-nim-i-usi-ess-ta
 grandmother-HON-COP-HON-PAST-DECL
 ‘The one who bore me is mother, but the one who fed me is grandmother.’
- (25) kunmwu kanung ciyek-un Pusan-ina Ilsan-i-si-pni-ta
 work possible area-TOP Pusan-or Ilsan-be-HON-POL-DECL
 ‘The area/region where (the honored one) might work is Pusan or Ilsan.’

In (25) the subject/topic is an area where someone may work, and the predicate is ‘Pusan or Ilsan’, which is clearly not honored. The honored target is the maximal human referent of the subject, though it does not seem very plausible (morpho-syntactically) that ‘an area where someone may work’ could itself be a noun phrase marked [HON +].

The example in (26) illustrates a similar point:

- (26) sayksang kyohwan piyong-un kwumayca-nim pwutam-i-si-pni-ta
 color exchange cost-TOP buyer-HON charge-be-HON-POL-DECL
 ‘The expense for exchange for a different color will be charged to the buyer(HON).’

Note that ‘buyer’ is not even the syntactic topic here, but clearly the force of the statement is intended to be directed to a potential buyer.

3.3. ‘Agreement’, but between the object and subject

Korean has some nouns which come in ‘honorific’ and ‘non-honorific’ pairs, such as *tayk* ~ *cip* (‘house’). A typical example involving *tayk* is given in (27):

- (27) tayk-ey-nun nwu-ka kyeysi-pni-kka?
 house(HON)-DAT-TOP who-NOM be.HON-POL-Q
 ‘Who is(HON) at the house(HON)?’

In this example, the subject is honored due to the specific form *kyeysi-* of the verb ‘be’, and *tayk* (‘house(HON)’) is most naturally interpreted as the house of the hearer. Hence the example means ‘Who (honorable) is at your (honorable) house?’. Due to these properties of its meaning, it is quite straightforward to use *tayk* in an example where the subject is not honored:

- (28) a. sensayng-nim tayk-ey-nun nwu-ka ka-ss-ni?
 teacher-HON house(HON)-DAT-TOP who-NOM go-PAST-Q
 ‘Who went to the teacher’s house?’
 b. swuni-ka sensayng-nim tayk-ul pangmwunhay-ss-upni-kka?
 Sooni-NOM teacher-HON house(HON)-ACC visit-PAST-POL-Q
 ‘Did Sooni visit your (the teacher’s) house?’

Here there is no *-(u)si* on the verb in these examples, as the subject is not honored; *tayk* need not be involved in honoring the subject.

However, in some cases it is possible for such a noun to honor the subject even when the honoring noun is not the subject itself. The noun *mal* means ‘language’, and with the verb *ha-ta* (‘do’), it means ‘speak’. *mal* has an honorific variant, *malssum*, and so (29)b is the honorific variant of (29)a.

- (29) a. etten salam-i mal-ul hay-ss-ni?
 which person-NOM word-ACC do-PAST-Q
 ‘Which person spoke?’
 b. etten pwun-i malssum-ul ha-si-ess-ni?
 which person(HON)-NOM word(HON)-ACC do-HON-PAST-Q

In (29)b, *-(u)si* on the verb might be triggered solely by the honorable subject with the honorific noun *pwun*. However, *malssum* here is not providing some general ‘social elevation’ within the example in the way we saw above with *tayk*, but is itself also providing honorification for the subject. We can see this by comparing the b and c examples in (30):

- (30) a. nwu-ka mal-ul hay-ss-ni?
 who-NOM word-ACC do-PAST-Q
 ‘Who spoke?’

- b. *nwu-ka malssum-ul ha-si-ess-ni?*
 who-NOM word(HON)-ACC do-HON-PAST-Q
- c. *?nwu-ka malssum-ul hay-ss-ni?*
 who-NOM word(HON)-ACC do-PAST-Q
- d. *?nwu-ka mal-ul ha-si-ess-ni?*
 who-NOM word-ACC do-HON-PAST-Q

Functioning as the object of *ha-ta*, *malssum* has to honor the subject, as we see reflected in the need for *-(u)si* on the verb (b vs. c).

While there is a certain kind of ‘agreement’ between *malssum* and *ha-si-*, note that it is not ‘honorific agreement’ between the verb and object (for *malssum* is not honored), but rather ‘honorific subject agreement’ (between verb and object). In other words, *malssum* honors the subject of the clause, and *ha-si-* does too; and looking at the actual forms in (30)b, there is no theory-independent sense in which *nwu* has any honorific specification at all. In other words, (30)b is a subject honorific example in which only the non-subjects express this information.

In an agreement-based account, there is no straightforward way to account for how an object can honor the subject, as the object and subject have no agreement relationship with each other. On the other hand, if we allow lexical items (or perhaps phrases) to specify properties of the clause in which they appear, then *malssum* and *ha-si-* introduce the same specification: (roughly,) the subject of the clause is honored. This would allow us to say that *nwu* is simply unspecified in (30), as its form suggests, and *nwu* is grammatical in such an example as it introduces no contradictory information.

4. Non-Subject Honorification

Non-subject honorification forms are used in cases where the target is referred to by a non-subject, and the target is socially superior to the speaker or the subject of the clause. Harada (1976) introduced the term ‘object honorification’ in a preliminary study of the phenomenon; Kuno (1987) introduced the more accurate term non-subject honorification. Japanese has a much wider system of non-subject honorification than Korean, subject to a variety of pragmatic conditions (see especially Hamano (1993), Mori (1993) and Matsumoto (1997)).

One way to mark non-subject honorification in Korean is with the postpositions *-kkey* and *-kkeyse*, which mark dative or oblique arguments as socially superior.⁹ As with the other markers which are hosted by nouns, they elevate the referent of the host noun over the speaker (see the examples below).

There are only a few non-subject honorific verb forms in modern Korean, and all are synchronically irregular. The complete list is in (31):

- (31) a. *cwu-ta ~ tuli-ta* (‘give’)
 (historically *tuli-ta* is the causative of *tu-l-* (‘hold up’))
- b. *teyli-ta ~ mosi-ta* (‘accompany’)
- c. *po-ta ~ poyp-ta* (‘see’)
- d. *alli-ta* (‘cause to know’) ~ *aloy-ta* (‘inform’)

⁹*-kkeyse* can mark both honorific subjects and honorific non-subjects (see e.g., Martin (1992)).

- e. mwut-ta ~ yeccwu-ta ('ask')

As can be inferred from the meanings of these verbs, some intuitively honor the direct object, and some the indirect object. Although *tuli-ta* historically has the meaning of 'give to a superior', Martin (1992) suggests treating all these 'honorific' forms as humbling forms in actuality ('humilifics').

In Japanese, the robust system of non-subject honorification is not restricted to targets of direct or indirect objects, and is often analyzed as 'lowering' of the social status of the subject relative to the target, namely, humilification (see Martin (1975), Kuno (1987), Sohn (1999), Ihm et al. (1988)). Korean non-subject honorification makes more sense when viewed as 'humilification' of the subject, lowering the status of the subject, and possibly the speaker, relative to the non-subject. The fact that hearer is not implicated in the meaning of non-subject honorification forms would follow if these are humbling or deferential forms, for the speaker would not normally lower the status of the hearer.

The examples in this section use the first two pairs of verbs in (31) to illustrate the use of non-subject honorification forms, marked with NSH in the glosses. Kuno and Kim (1985) observe that exactly which argument is the trigger is not fully determined for *tuli-ta*, as the examples in (32)–(33) show:¹⁰

- (32) a. na-nun i-sensayng-nim-kkey kanhowen-ul teyli-eta cwu-ess-ta
 I-TOP Lee-teacher-HON-HON.DAT nurse-ACC take-COMP give-PAST-DECL
 'I took a nurse to teacher Lee (for the nurse's benefit).'
- b. na-nun i-sensayng-nim-kkey kanhowen-ul teyli-eta tuli-ess-ta
 I-TOP Lee-teacher-HON-HON.DAT nurse-ACC take-COMP give(NSH)-PAST-DECL
 'I took a nurse to teacher Lee (for teacher Lee's benefit).'

In (32)a, the non-honorific lower verb means that the nurse is the one accompanied. The reasoning is as follows: 'Teacher Lee' cannot be understood as the goal of the non-honorific *cwu-ta*, so it must be understood as the goal of *teyli-ta*, and in that case, the goal/beneficiary of *cwu-ta* is understood as the nurse. In (32)b, the non-subject honorification matrix verb indicates that its goal/beneficiary is an honorable one, namely 'Teacher Lee'. The humilific meaning of *tuli-ta* has the effect that the subject ('I') deferentially lowers him/herself with respect Teacher Lee.

In the following examples, the embedded predicate is itself a non-subject honorification form:

- (33) a. na-nun kanhowen-eykey i-sensayng-nim-ul mosi-eta cwu-ess-ta
 I-TOP nurse-DAT Lee-teacher-HON-ACC take(NSH)-COMP give-PAST-DECL
 'I took teacher Lee to the nurse (for the nurse's benefit).'
- b. na-nun kanhowen-eykey i-sensayng-nim-ul mosi-eta
 I-TOP nurse-DAT Lee-teacher-HON-ACC take(NSH)-COMP
 tuli-ess-ta
 give(NSH)-PAST-DECL
 'I took teacher Lee to the nurse (for teacher Lee's benefit).'

¹⁰The indeterminacy of the non-subject honorification target is a problem for accounts of non-subject honorification which treat it as a kind of syntactic agreement. Comparable data exists in Japanese, a problem acknowledged in Boeckx and Niinuma (2004, 456–7); see also Bobaljik and Yatsushiro (2006).

- c. na-nun i-sensayng-nim-kkey uysa-sensayng-nim-ul mosi-eta
 I-TOP Lee-teacher-HON-HON.DAT doctor-teacher-HON-ACC take(NSH)-COMP
 tuli-ess-ta
 give(NSH)-PAST-DECL
 ‘I took the doctor to teacher Lee (for the teacher’s OR the doctor’s benefit).’

In (33)a–b, the honorable one with respect to the embedded predicate is ‘Teacher Lee’, and the beneficiary of the matrix predicate is determined as in (32). In (33)c, the two honorable arguments may be targeted, each by one of the predicates, or ‘the doctor’ may be understood to be the one targeted by both.

In some cases, the honored argument in the matrix clause is null, apparently controlling an argument in the embedded clause. (34)a with two embedding verbs: the matrix verb *tuli-ta* and the causative intermediate verb *hay*. The overt argument *kim-sensayngnim-ul* is the causee argument of *hay*, controlling the null subject of most embedded verb *ka-si-key*. However, the null dative argument of the matrix *tuli-ta* is also understood as coreferential with this argument, the structurally lower *kim-sensayngnim-ul*:

- (34) a. na-nun kim-sensayng-nim-ul yek-ey ka-si-key hay
 I-TOP Kim-teacher-HON-ACC station-DAT go-HON-COMP do.COMP
 tuli-ess-ta
 give(NSH)-PAST-DECL
 ‘I let Teacher Kim go to the station.’
- b. na-nun kim-sensayng-nim-kkeyse yek-ey ka-si-key hay
 I-TOP Kim-teacher-HON-HON.SUBJ station-DAT go-HON-COMP do.COMP
 tuli-ess-ta
 give(NSH)-PAST-DECL
 ‘I let Teacher Kim go to the station.’

In (34)b, *kim-sensayngnim-kkeyse* is apparently the subject of *ka-si-key*, the most embedded predicate. We can see this due to (35), where the only honorific predicate is the lowest one:

- (35) na-nun kim-kyoswu-nim-kkeyse hakhoy-ey ka-si-key hay
 I-TOP Kim-professor-HON-HON.DAT conference-DAT go-HON-COMP do.COMP
 cwu-ess-ta
 give-PAST-DECL
 ‘I made/let Professor Kim go to the conference (for Peter’s benefit/sake).’

This example can be used in the following slightly convoluted but reasonable context: Peter wants Professor Kim to come to a conference that he is organizing, for he thinks that Professor Kim would be a good commentator. However, he is not sure if he can persuade Professor Kim to come. The speaker is Professor Kim’s research assistant, who is a good friend of Peter’s. Knowing this situation, the assistant (‘I’) wanted to help Peter, and managed to persuade Professor Kim to go to the conference. In this example, there is only honorification, and no humilification.

We have included this section for two reasons: for the sake of completeness, setting out the range of data than any account of Korean honorification should be able to address; and to illustrate the interaction of the systems of honorification and humilification. In the following section, we lay out some basic properties that an adequate analysis must have.

5. Towards An Analysis

5.1. The Meaning of Honorification

Alongside regular compositional meaning, Potts (2005) makes a case for expressive meaning, and suggests that honorifics fall into this category. Expressive meaning is an emotive aspect of meaning, paralleling but separate from regular propositional meaning. For instance, imagine the following examples spoken by a Cockney-speaking attendant working for an upper-class lady:

- (36) a. She sat down.
b. Her ladyship sat down.
c. Her ladyship's only gone and sat down!
d. Her ladyship's only gone and parked her bum!

These examples all have the propositional content of (36)a, but other examples have extra expressive dimensions of meaning, at least involving the speakers' attitude towards the subject, the (un)expectedness of the sitting act.

Using the notion of expressive meaning, Potts and Kawahara (2004) develop an analysis of one type of Japanese honorific, the verbal form *o-V-ni naru*, roughly corresponding to *-(u)si* in Korean. They show how expressive meaning differs from propositional meaning – for instance, in (37), the honorific part of the meaning cannot be under the scope of negation, while other parts of the propositional meaning are:

- (37) a. amwu sensayng-nim-to anc-ci anh-usi-ess-ta
any teacher-HON-even sit.down-COMP NEG-HON-PAST-DECL
'No teachers (who I honor) sat down.'
- b. #ku papo-ka anc-ci anh-usi-ess-ta
that fool-NOM sit.down-COMP NEG-HON-PAST-DECL
(int.) 'That fool (who I do not honor) sat down.'

In the first example, the fact that teachers are honored is not negated, even though negation appears to scope semantically over the subject, which is a negative polarity item. *anh-usi-* can never mean 'is not honored', as the unacceptability of the second example shows. This Korean form can only mean 'honorable one does not ...'. (37)b is of course acceptable without the honorific marker *-usi-*.

The two key aspects of expressive meaning are its separation from propositional meaning, as just described, and its continuous and incremental nature, a property which has been featured in our discussion throughout the paper.

In the system developed by Potts, regular meanings (e.g., for individuals) are drawn from a domain e , while expressive meanings are drawn from a separate domain ε ; regular meanings might be things like the individual 'Teacher Kim' or the set of people who sit down, while expressive meanings might have emotive contents like 'the speaker shows deference to an individual i ' or 'the speaker judges that sitting down was extremely unexpected'. Potts develops a type theory for meaning types in which expressive meanings can be the outputs of functional types; their information can be added (as constraints on context), but that is all:

- (38) a. e and t are regular types.

- b. ε is an expressive type.
- c. If σ and τ are regular types, $\langle \sigma, \tau \rangle$ is a regular type.
- d. If σ is a regular type, $\langle \sigma, \varepsilon \rangle$ is a regular type.
- e. Nothing else is a type.

In this way, expressive meanings do not interact with the propositional meanings, and can only be added (their privative nature).

As a kind of expressive meaning, honorific meaning is information about context, in particular, the social setting of an utterance, and is explicitly treated as contextual information in Han (1991), Park (1992) and Pollard and Sag (1994). Potts and Kawahara (2004) assume a contextual parameter for honorification, C_{HON} , in addition to the usual contextual parameters of speaker, hearer, location, etc. Every context requires a specification of at least speaker, hearer, location, and time of utterance. Potts and Kawahara propose an extra requirement, to the effect that contexts are only well-defined if they have the requisite honorification information; their main condition is given in (39):

- (39) A context is admissible only if C_{HON} (a subset of D_ε) contains exactly one triple aRb (from D_ε) for every contextually salient $b \in D_e$. (Potts and Kawahara (2004, (22)))

The triple aRb expresses a numerical relation between the speaker a and the target b , where b is a contextually salient person from D_e , the domain of entities. As R is numerical, it is potentially continuously variable. These triples themselves are drawn from D_ε , the domain of expressive meanings, built up alongside the regular propositional meaning as described briefly above. For example, if C_{HON} contains $a0b_1$ and $a1b_2$, this could represent a situation where the speaker a does not honor b_1 at all but honors b_2 to a significant degree, where b_1 and b_2 are individuals referred to in the utterance.

Let us look at a more concrete example:

- (40) ku pwun-i ka-si-ess-upni-ta
that person(HON)-NOM go-HON-PAST-POL-DECL

Assume that the speaker is s , the hearer is h , t is a time, and that ‘that person’ picks out individual i . Then (40) has the meaning components in (41):

- (41) a. Propositional meaning: $go(t)(i) \wedge t < now$
intuitively: “i goes at t and t is before now”
- b. Expressive meaning: defined for a context C only if C_{HON} contains $s1h$ and $s1i$
intuitively: “the speaker honors the hearer and the speaker honors i”

The Potts and Kawahara approach could provide the basis for a formal treatment of Korean honorification, though the honorific information must represent the social status of the target relative to the speaker and also relative to the hearer, and these may be different. Additionally, there must be some way of representing both honorification and humilification, which might suggest that individuals must be differentially situated with respect to some sort of social baseline.

While Potts and Kawahara discuss ‘honorification’ and ‘anti-honorification’, it seems to us that these are rather different phenomena, and we do not feel that there is any negative aspect to (the absence of) honorification. In other words, the number R above would only have positive values, determined by any of the honorific forms we have discussed here (see the following subsection). In an utterance without any honorific form, the speaker has introduced no expressive meaning, and therefore may have failed to take an opportunity to honor a target to whom deference should be due.

5.2. Quantified Subjects

This section needs to be completed.

One expectation of the expressive meaning approach as developed by Potts and Kawahara is that quantification and honorification should not interact. However, this expectation is not met; in addition to the examples in (15), repeated here, other examples with quantification of the target can be found:

- (15) a. amwuto eps-ess-ta
anyone NEG.be-PAST-DECL
'No one was there.'
- b. amwuto an kyeyisi-ess-ta
anyone NEG be.HON-PAST-DECL
'No one(HON) was there.'
- (42) a. onul myech pwun-ina o-si-pni-kka?
today how.many person(HON)-PRT come-HON-POL-Q
'How many people will come today?' (Martin (1992, 760))
- b. kyoswu-nim-tul-cwung myech pwun-i caki haksayng-man
professor-HON-PLU-among how.many person(HON)-NOM self student-only
chwuchenha-si-ess-ni?
recommend-HON-PAST-Q
'How many professors recommended only their own students?'
- c. etten pwun-tul-i caki kacok-man chotayha-si-ess-ni?
which person(HON)-PLU-NOM self family-only invite-HON-PAST-Q
'Which people invited only their families?'

The last two examples are chosen to show that a quantified subject which is the target of honorification is quantifying over individuals, for it binds a pronoun as a variable.

5.3. The Use of Honorification

Above, we have presented facts which we summarize in (43), regarding the forms which indicate some kind of honorification in Korean. In this subsection we address in a little more detail what the meanings of the honorific forms are, and how they are used.

- (43) a. The use of an NP-internal honorific marker recognizes the superior social status of the referent of the noun host of the marker (the target) in relation to the speaker, by elevating the target.
- b. The use of a subject-honorific verb recognizes the superior social status of the maximal human referent of the subject (the target) in relation to the hearer, by elevating the target.
- c. The use of a non-subject-honorific verb recognizes the superior social status of the referent of the noun host of the marker (the target) in relation to the referent of the subject, by lowering the referent of the subject relative to the target.

As noted in the introduction, the use of honorifics is performative, in the sense that using them is precisely the required social expression of deference.¹¹ The use of honorifics is also dependent on the speech context: it is conditioned by normal interactions in which social conventions dictate that deference is due. For this reason, honorifics are not used in situations of textbook description or pure news reporting, even though these certainly involve language used in relatively formal settings (e.g., (44), noted by Ihm et al. (1988, 201)), or, for example, in the discourse of student demonstrations (noted by Lee and Ramsey (2000, 240)).

- (44) taythonglyeng-i mikwuk-ul pangmwun ha-ta
 president-NOM U.S.-ACC visit do-DECL
 ‘The president visits the U.S.’

These observations suggest that there is a kind of politeness principle for social interaction (regulating culturally appropriate behavior):¹²

- (45) You must acknowledge the superior social status of any contextually salient person.

This is interpreted in the same fashion as Grice’s maxims of conversation: if the hearer recognizes that the speaker could have used an honorific form and did not, the hearer draws some inferences from that fact (in a normal context, that the speaker is being deliberately non-deferential for some reason).

Although honorification may usually be related to a certain level of formality, this is again driven by on conditions of appropriate use. Lee and Ramsey (2000) note that the use of honorification can sometimes allow the speaker to empathize with the hearer (cf. Lee and Kuno (1995)), thereby making an utterance more ‘familiar’. For example, normally a child would use an honorific form to his/her father, while a third-party adult might not use an honorific form when talking about the father. Hence, an adult who is socially superior to a child’s father might ask (46)a to that child. Alternatively, the adult could use (46)b, taking the perspective that the child him/herself would take:

- (46) a. apeci encey o-ni?
 father when come-Q
 To the child: ‘When will your father come?’
 b. apeci encey o-si-ni?
 father when come-HON-Q
 To the child: ‘When will your father (as you view him) come?’

In fact, (46)b might be the more common expression, as part of the social process of having the child learn the correct forms of usage.

There are some circumstances when true over-use of honorification is apparent, and this too is interpreted in a Gricean fashion – if the hearer perceives honorific forms that do not match the social situation, the hearer will infer some kind of irony or deliberate use of over-‘flowery’ language.

It is a matter of knowing Korean, to know which nouns are used for targets which should receive honor, and to know which social situations call for such usage. Nouns such as *moksa* (‘pastor’) and *sensayng* ‘teacher’ reflect a certain social standing, as do kinship terms like *ape-ci* (‘father’) within the family context; nouns such as *sonnim* (‘guest’) and *kokayk* (‘customer’) refer to individuals in

¹¹Potts and Kawahara (2004) consider the use of honorifics to be a secondary speech act.

¹²Cf. Kaplan (1999, 28), quoted in Potts (2005, 180) “... in addition to the desire to be *held* in respect, people desire to be *paid* respect, and honorifics can be the coin of that payment”.

service contexts, to which the social norms of Korean dictate some honorification or politeness. On the other hand, a noun like *elun* ('adult') reflects no social status whatsoever, and hence is unlikely to be used in contexts which require honorification to be expressed.

As we have described above, any marker on a noun such as *-nim*, *-kkey* or *-kkeyse* indicates that the referent of the host noun is recognized by the speaker as socially superior to the speaker. *-kkeyse* imparts a high degree of social elevation to the target. It would be a reasonable approach to rule out forms like **elun-nim* ('honorable adult') by making *-nim* a multiplier of the degree of relative social status (the value of *R* above); only nouns which indicate some social status could then have their referents participate in relative social status. This would also explain why **nwukwu-nim* 'who(HON)' is bad, even though *nwukwu* may host *-kkeyse* and/or appear with a verb marked with *-(u)si*. Alternatively, it could be that *-nim* presupposes that its N host refers to a person of social status (i.e., that *R* is constrained to have a positive value).

The marker *-(u)si* on a verb has a slightly different meaning: it makes the indication of social superiority with regard to the maximal human referent of the subject, in relation to the hearer. Hence, using *-kkeyse* on the subject but failing to use *-(u)si* on the verb (see the examples in (5), repeated here) means that the speaker elevates the target high above him/herself, but fails to elevate the target with respect to the hearer, a situation that is difficult to conceive within the usual social settings in Korean.

- (5) a. *ape-nim-kkeyse mence ka-*(si-)ess-ta*
 father-HON-HON.SUBJ first go-*(HON-)PAST-DECL
 'Father went first.'
- b. *ape-nim-i mence ka-(si-)ess-ta*
 father-HON-NOM first go-(HON-)PAST-DECL

The rather flexible use of *-(u)si* is presumably related to the fact that it shows deference to the target as the 'topic' of the clause – not so much the one who the clause 'is about' as who the clause is relevant to. This seems particularly apparent in examples like (25) and (26), repeated here:

- (25) *kunmwu kanung ciyek-un Pusan-ina Ilsan-i-si-pni-ta*
 work possible area-TOP Pusan-or Ilsan-be-HON-POL-DECL
 'The area/region where (the honored one) might work is Pusan or Ilsan.'
- (26) *sayksang kyohwan piyong-un kwumayca-nim pwutam-i-si-pni-ta*
 color exchange cost-TOP buyer-HON charge-be-HON-POL-DECL
 'The expense for exchange for a different color will be charged to the buyer(HON).'

This flexibility of *-(u)si* extends to examples like those in (47), from Kim-Renaud (2000, 307):

- (47) a. *mian-ha-si-ciman, ...*
 sorry-do-HON-but, ...
 'I am sorry, but ...' (ordinary conversation)
- b. *kkok philyoha-si-n kes-ul cwu-si-ese kamsaha-pni-ta*
 just need-HON-MOD thing-ACC give-HON-CONJ thank-POL-DECL
 'Thank you for giving me just what I need.' (receiving a gift from a teacher)

These are real examples in which the ‘subject honorification’ form (underlined) is used – typically in a grammatically embedded environment – to indicate politeness to the hearer (the grammatical subject is first-person, and cannot be the target of honorification). As Kim-Renaud notes, there is an interesting question as to whether such examples really involve ‘errors’, or rather whether they are symptomatic of an extension by the speaker of the use of *-(u)si*, in an attempt to respond to the presence of a person of high social standing. We feel that such examples support the idea that the linguistic basis of honorification is its function as expressive meaning, from which more strictly grammatical properties such as agreement may be apparent, but only in a restricted subset of the data.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have argued that the expressive dimension of the meaning of honorification leads to the conclusion that it should be treated as a privative property, not one with positive and negative values. We have also argued that the nature of honorification on a subject differs from the nature of honorification on a predicate. A deeper and more precise account of honorification is still needed, but we feel that the considerations we have focussed on here show that little insight could possibly be gained by any attempt to assimilate the distribution of honorific forms in a clause to purely formal agreement patterns. Rather, future research should concentrate on the contextual information introduced by each honorific form, and on how these contributions add up incrementally to some overall honorific ‘value’ for a given example. As we noted above, in addition to honorification, the analytic system must be extended to encompass ‘humilification’, which is clearly found in both Korean and Japanese. Additionally, a broader analysis would extend to ‘anti-honorifics’ (see Choe (2004), Potts and Kawahara (2004)), though it is not clear to us that these are really expressing a negative kind of honorification, rather than a different dimension of expressive meaning.

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